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The Earth-bound members of the Fincke family are pictured at Johnson Space Center. Renita Fincke sits next to son Chandra and holds daughter Tarali Paulina, who was born June 18 while her father, Mike Fincke, orbited in the International Space Station.

What has he added to your lives?

We probably couldn't even tell you in words. It has just been absolutely amazing. I think from the day he was born, he's a wonderful child. Mike and I both just adore him. He's just been great, and added so much to our lives. I can't imagine what it would be like without him. He's very active, very intelligent, a lot of fun – a lot of work, too, but I think that all goes along with the territory. So we're really, really excited about having a second one.

You've told me that he interacts really well with adults, with the fellow astronauts.

Yes, he does. One of the first things that he said to his daddy when Mike called – I guess it was the day after Mike's launch – he called and said, "How are you doing, Chandra?" Chandra said, "Great." And Mike said, "Well, what are you doing?" He said, "Well, I'm playing with my friends." His "friends" happened to be an astronaut and a flight surgeon.

I know when you planned your pregnancy you all were thinking Mike was going much later to the Space Station. So how did you feel when you learned he was going to be gone when the baby's born?

There's only so much planning you can do for a pregnancy. It's going to happen when it's going to happen. One of the other astronaut spouses once told me, "Don't ever plan anything around launches." And you know what? That's so true. We can never plan around launches. I'm glad that it happened when it did. We're so blessed to be having a second child. It didn't scare me that he was going to be gone. We just had to prepare the right way to make sure everything was set up before he left. I think that everything will be just fine.

How long have you known that you wanted to be an engineer?

When I was in high school, I was really interested in math and science and that's what I was doing really well at. My father's an engineer and so that kind of got me in the right field. I think that's about when I decided to become an engineer.

Tell me a little bit about your family's background.

My parents were both born in India. We're from a small state called Assam, on the very east coast. And it's very, very rich in culture. It's a beautiful, beautiful state. They grow tea there, they've got beautiful mountains, and it really is a wonderful place. Mike got a chance to visit there last year. He got to meet a lot of my family and that was a lot of fun because they just loved him ... of course! I really enjoy having part of another culture that's part of me, because that, I think, makes me a more well-rounded person.

Tell me about your son, Chandra; how old is he?

He's almost 3.

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Astronaut Mike Fincke, Expedition 9 NASA ISS science officer and flight engineer, is pictured near fresh fruit floating freely in the Zvezda Service Module of the International Space Station.

him on the phone. We're planning on doing a video conference with the newborn, and so we'll make sure that he is in the loop.

How do you plan to keep Mike involved in the baby's life in the months after the birth, before he returns?

I think we'll be doing a lot of video because that's easy for him to be able to see how the baby's growing. In the first four months the baby changes a lot. We'll be able to make sure, between pictures, video and the video conferences, that we keep him in the loop.

As she gets older, what are you going to want her to know about this time in her life, and what are you going to always tell her about?

I think the main thing is that her daddy was doing an important job during her birth, but that he really loves her and that he is always going to have her as part of him, and that she's loved by everybody.

What are you looking most forward to when Mike gets back?

Spending family time together, definitely. It'll be nice to have some quiet time where we get to just enjoy life.

Mike has repeatedly said he owes you big time for this – for going it alone. What does he owe you? What are you going to collect on?

You mean, besides a car and a house? No, I'm just kidding! He's not going to owe me anything big – probably just being able to spend time together. This is a wonderful, exciting adventure for both of us, and I've supported him all the way – I support him every day. I hope that everything is successful for his mission, that he comes home safely, and that we get to enjoy many more adventures together for the rest of our lives.

NEW ATTRACTION AT THE NBL

Science, art and the embodiment of human perfection

by Tiffany Travis

For ages, the combination of science, technology and art has intrigued the greatest of minds. Albert Einstein said “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious - the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science.” Recently, The Sonny Carter Training Facility Neutral Buoyancy Lab (NBL) received such a combination in the form of a mural.

Derived from Renaissance origins, the artistic addition was the idea and creation of NBL Oceaneering Utility Diver Shanna Crew. She said she felt that a mural could give the white walls of the world-class training facility a touch of color and inspiration for all who visited and worked in the facility.

“Shanna thought the NBL needed a creative face-lift,” Michael G. Hess, NBL Chief, said. “She brought in the preliminary drawings and we all thought it was a really cool idea. There are two maintenance weeks scheduled each year. This most recent maintenance period worked out to be the perfect time for us to do something like this and not get in the way of normal dive operations. The mural really makes this highly visible area sparkle.”

The south wall of Test Conductor Room A was selected as the mural’s location due to its visibility. Protocol tours, Space Center Houston guests and all who pass the pool deck will be able to gaze upon the 6' X 12' work of art.

In a mere four days Crew was able to complete the spectacle that captures the past, present and future evolution of an extravehicular activity (EVA). Her original inspiration came from the EVA patch that depicts a suited astronaut as Leonardo da Vinci’s “Vitruvian Man.” Crew combined the concept of the EVA patch with the suited astronaut and Da Vinci’s original image. Continuing a morphed theme, Crew illustrated the cooperation of astronauts and divers by having a utility diver hand the “Astronaut/Vitruvian Man” a pistol grip tool. The evolution is completed as an astronaut conducts an EVA while



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working on the largest architectural project ever assembled in space, the International Space Station.

“I wanted to create something that said what the people at the NBL do on a daily basis,” Crew said. “It’s not just about the divers or just about the astronauts. It’s about teamwork and all of us working out here together for a common goal.”

“This mural will hopefully be the first of a series of murals planned for the future,” Ronald Lee, NBL Deputy Chief, said. “It really means a lot to have Shanna, one of our own divers, as the creator of the mural. Gene Kranz said it best when he said, ‘The most important thing we have is our people.’ That is so true. We have so many talented people out here.”

Crew’s passion for art became apparent on her mother’s walls as a young child. Doodling, drawing and painting became hobbies and eventually led to some small residential projects. This is her first highly visible public work.

Crew has been diving for the NBL for more than three years. She became a professional diver after taking diving as a

physical education credit in college and shortly afterwards obtained her dive master’s certification. While working in a local dive shop in Nacogdoches, Texas, she heard about an opportunity to dive with astronauts at the NBL and thought it would be a great experience. She has logged over 1000 dive hours to date in the NBL pool.

“Shanna is a really good diver. You have to be (a good diver) to be in the Utility group,” Rudy Lopez, Dive Supervisor, said. “I never knew she was an artist until I found out she was the person drawing funny little pictures of me all over the place. I didn’t have a clue that she could do something like this, though. It really amazes me that she can do the mural freehanded.”

Crew has yet to title the artwork. She hopes that the piece can speak for itself and provide spectators with a glimpse of what the NBL attempts to accomplish each day. Crew also hopes that she was able to capture the very essence of what NASA strives for – to go beyond and to unravel the mysteries that lay before us.



The Sonny Carter Training Facility Neutral Buoyancy Lab south wall was turned into a work of art by one of its own divers, Shanna Crew.